

APPROVED FEBRUARY 27, 2018

Montgomery County Community Action Board
January 23, 2018
1401 Rockville Pike, Room 3603

MINUTES

CAB Members – Present: Isaac Osei Assare, Alejandro Becerra, Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Stacy Coletta, Lisa Conlon, Jackie Dennard, Lisette Engel, Gail Gunod-Green, Laura Irwin, Ron Jennings, Tiffany Jones, Agnes Leshner, Pamela Luckett, Steve Ruffin, and Zelda Wafer-Alonge

CAB Members Absent: Mary Bennett, Juliette Traore and Mike Subin

Guests: Mike Durso, President of the Board of Education; Erica Jackson, MCPS/MCEA; Sebastian Hand, MCPS/MCEA; and Maeve Tilly, DHHS

Staff: Sharon Strauss, Charlene Muhammad, and Leah Goldfine

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7 pm.

Consent Agenda: The consent agenda was approved with no items moved to the meeting agenda. The consent agenda included the November 28, 2017 CAB meeting minutes, evaluation results from the November 28, 2017 meeting, Executive Director's report, Head Start report, Head Start grant update, DHHS letter to MCPS requesting that MCPS retain the 20 Head Start community slots through FY20, Head Start P Card statement (email only), Head Start grant letter (email only), CAA contracts report, CAB testimony for the BOE budget hearing (email only), CAB letter of support re: Montgomery Moving Forward's Call to Action (email only), CAB testimony re: employer child care center tax credit bill (email only), the CAI report (email only), and CAI workshop evaluations summary (email only).

Head Start Report: Charlene provided an update on the Head Start monitoring visit, which will take place during the week of February 12. Charlene led a training session for the Executive Committee members and is working closely with MCPS to prepare for the review.

Charlene presented the Head Start transportation waiver to the Board members. Each year, the Head Start program requests a waiver of certain federal transportation requirements, including bus monitors, child-specific restraints, and a belt cutter on each bus. Because the County's program uses MCPS buses, these requirements do not apply. Laura moved to approve the transportation waiver request and Agnes seconded the motion. All Board members voted in favor.

Charlene provided an update on the proposed MCPS FY19 budget, which would combine the two supervisor positions within the Head Start/Pre-K program into one position. Currently, one supervisor oversees Title I schools while a second supervisor oversees Head Start. There is no overlap between the responsibilities of the two positions.

Zelda informed the Board that when the Head Start Parents Policy Council learned of this proposed change, they asked why this change had to happen. The position in question plays a vital role in helping families, among numerous other responsibilities. The HSPPC did not receive a clear answer to this question. The parents decided to write a letter expressing their concerns. CAB members received a copy of the Policy Council's letter in their meeting packets.

After learning of this proposal, the CAB Executive Committee invited Board of Education President Mike Durso to the CAB meeting. The Board is also working with MCPS administrators to schedule a meeting to discuss the Board's concerns about this decision and to get a better understanding of the plan. While the BOE can provide "big picture" analysis, the MCPS administrators can provide details.

With regard to the Federal Head Start regulations, compliance questions were raised. While there is no requirement that there be two supervisors, a great deal of oversight of the program is a definite requirement. The position in question supervises 40 employees, serves on numerous local and state committees, and provides critical assistance to Head Start parents. Additionally, the position in question has extensive knowledge of the Head Start program, including all federal rules and regulations and Performance Standards.

The fact that neither the Policy Council nor the CAB were consulted prior to this decision being made, may also mean that the program is out of compliance with federal regulations. The Head Start Act requires approval by the governing body for any key personnel changes.

Board members asked about comparison Head Start programs. High-performing Head Start programs have a great deal of oversight. When programs make structural changes that reduce oversight, this often leads to serious problems. This was the case in Prince George's County, which ultimately lost its federal funding.

Executive Director's Report: CAB members received a written report highlighting updates for the VITA program, TESS Center, agency administration, contracts, CAB, HR, and Head Start. Sharon provided an update on a recent DHCD meeting. The Department, which oversees the federal funds distribution for Community Action Agencies in the state, is looking at ways to speed-up the distribution of funds. Sharon also discussed the National Performance Indicators, which are a new way of reporting outcomes this year.

CAB Updates: Sharon and Pam recently participated in the Human Rights Commission's annual retreat. They discussed poverty and human rights in Montgomery County, demographics, the Self-Sufficiency Standard, the Community Advocacy Institute, and the Board's poverty forums. The Commission was impressed by the relationship between the Board and the agency.

CAB members are encouraged to participate in two upcoming events: the EITC Awareness/VITA Kick-off Joint Proclamation on January 30 and the launch of the interactive Self-Sufficiency Standard on January 31.

Sharon noted that the VITA program now has 45 trained preparers. The TESS Center continues to receive requests for services from the victims of the Flower Branch Apartments fire.

Contracts: Aizat reported that she and Melissa are completing monitoring visits for all of the partners. Board members received a list of the scheduled visits and are invited to participate in these meetings. Board members who participate have an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about these organizations.

Meeting with BOE President Mike Durso: Board members met with BOE President Durso to discuss concerns regarding the proposed elimination of one of two supervisors within the Head Start/Pre-K program. Tiffany provided an overview of the Head Start Parents Policy Council's concerns, explaining that the person in this position has a great deal of knowledge of Head Start, including federal rules and regulations, and works closely with the Head Start parents.

President Durso provided an overview of the MCPS budget process. He explained that MCPS has a \$2.58 billion budget but it still does not cover all of the needs. The majority of the budget covers staff salaries. The Superintendent's proposed budget for FY19 includes realignment of certain positions. President Durso emphasized that these are just recommendations though, and the Board of Education can make adjustments. The deadline for amendments is February 13. President Durso recommended that the CAB submit a one-page memo explaining their concerns, which he would share with the BOE.

President Durso was asked about the reasoning behind this decision. Although he did not know all of the details surrounding this decision, he noted that Dr. Smith would like to streamline supervision within MCPS and get staff back in the classrooms.

CAB members emphasized that oversight is a significant concern for the Head Start program. Inadequate supervision could lead to the program falling out of compliance with federal regulations. Furthermore, in this time of growth within the school system and within Head Start/Pre-K, oversight is even more critical.

Follow-Up Discussion: Following the meeting with President Durso, the Board discussed next steps. The Board discussed submitting a one-page memo to President Durso, as he requested, along with a letter. Topics/points to include in the letter were the number of children impacted, the cost of training a new supervisor, the impact of the elimination of this position, and the process outlined in the Head Start regulations for consulting governing bodies before making personnel changes. Laura, Tiffany, and Gail volunteered to participate in the writing/editing of the letter. Steve moved to submit a one-page memo to Dr. Durso summarizing the Board's concerns and a letter to the Board of Education, Superintendent Dr. Jack Smith, the County Council, and County Executive Leggett. Laura seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

CAB Updates Continued: CAB members reviewed the FY17 annual report. Gail moved to approve the annual report and Laura seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

CAB members were presented with updates to the CAB bylaws. The changes clarify a few aspects of the Board's work, including the democratic election process for low-income representatives, the conflict of interest policy, and the role of the Secretary. CAB members will review the changes and vote on the updated bylaws at the February CAB meeting.

Two new committees were established: the CAB Awards Planning Committee and the Nominating Committee. The Awards Planning Committee will plan the annual Community Action celebration on May 22, including selecting award winners. Lisette, Laura, Gail, Lisa, Isaac, and Valerie volunteered to serve on this committee. The Nominating Committee will identify CAB members who are interested in serving on the FY19 Executive Committee and will finalize the EC slate. The slate must be presented to the CAB ahead of the March CAB meeting. Pam, Zelda, and Agnes volunteered to serve on this committee [Mary volunteered at a later date].

Agnes attended a recent Council hearing where a new Office of Legislative Oversight report about infant and toddler child care programs was discussed. The report highlights the very high return on investment that high-quality child care provides, including the extensive research on the topic. Cost is a major challenge for lower-income families. It was also noted that in addition to the long waitlist for child care subsidies, some vouchers are not used by recipients. Vouchers cover 70% of the child care cost but some parents may not be able to cover the remaining 30%. Agnes noted that another important issue raised during the hearing was the need for more bi-lingual child care staff.

Announcements: Stacy reported that the Department of Transportation received additional funding to expand the Call-N-Ride program.

Lisa reported that the new Head Start/Pre-K registration flyers are available with current dates. Registration for the 2018 – 2019 school year begins March 5.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 pm.